

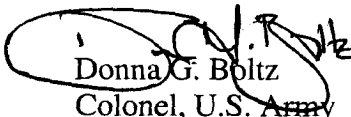
**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, ALASKA**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**INSTALLATION FENCING PROJECT, FORT
WAINWRIGHT, ALASKA**

July 28, 2004

APPROVED BY:



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NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider potential environmental impacts prior to undertaking a course of action. Within the Department of the Army, NEPA is implemented through regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality [40 CFR Parts 1500 - 1517], with supplemental guidance provided by Army NEPA regulations [32 CFR Part 651]. In conformance with NEPA, Fort Wainwright officials have prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to consider the environmental affects of a proposed installation-fencing project.

ACTION: Installation Fencing Project, Fort Wainwright, Alaska

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS: An EA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) have been prepared, and provides a report of the analysis of potential environmental impacts represented by the proposed action (installation fencing project at Fort Wainwright). Interested parties are invited to submit, in writing, any comments they have concerning the proposed action. Comments received will be reviewed and considered in the decision process. The public comment period begins on the first day of publication of this notice in the local media and extends for 30 days. Copies of the EA and draft FNSI are available upon request or can be downloaded from the following location: <http://www.usarak.army.mil/conservation/>. For further information, please contact Roger Sayre, Environmental Resources Department, United States Army Garrison Alaska (USAG-AK), Directorate of Public Works, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-6500, telephone: (907) 353-3001; roger.sayre@wainwright.army.mil.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: An EA has been prepared to determine the extent of environmental impacts of the proposed action and to decide whether these impacts are significant. If the proposed action results in significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be prepared to provide additional information on the context, duration, and intensity of the impacts. If the EA shows that the proposed action will not result in significant impacts, a FNSI would be prepared and NEPA compliance satisfied. An EA briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis to enable a decision maker to determine whether a proposed action has the potential to significantly impact the environment. A FNSI is a document that briefly presents the reasons why a proposed action will not have a significant effect on the quality of the environment. The FNSI documents the decision maker's conclusion that there is no potential for significant environmental impact, and that an EIS is not required for NEPA compliance. This decision is reached only after thorough review of the information provided in the EA and consideration of public comments.

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DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Installation Fencing Project, Fort Wainwright, Alaska

Description of Action: U.S. Army Garrison Alaska (USAG-AK) proposes to install fencing along and near portions of the Fort Wainwright military installation's Main Post boundary. The proposed installation fencing would delineate the Fort Wainwright boundary to alert the public that it is entering military training land; deter both vehicle and pedestrian trespass and reduce other illegal activities; reduce the cantonment area's vulnerability to unauthorized vehicular and pedestrian intrusion and protect resources necessary for National Defense; and would allow soldiers to train to standard safely and efficiently by reducing the number of military guards required to be posted along training area boundaries during training events.

The decision to be made is which one of four alternatives to implement: Alternative 1: No Action Alternative (no new fencing); Alternative 2: Main Post Fencing; Alternative 3: Main Post Fencing, Excluding Golf Course; or Alternative 4: High Security Fencing. Other alternatives were also considered but eliminated from detailed evaluation because the alternatives were cost prohibitive or otherwise infeasible.

Discussion of Anticipated Environmental Impacts of Installation Fencing Project, Fort Wainwright, Alaska: The analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with each of the alternative actions considered is set forth in the Environmental Assessment (EA) accompanying this decision document. Potential issues were determined to be relevant if they fell within the scope of the proposed action; if they suggested different actions or mitigation; if outside agency correspondence was required; or if they otherwise influenced the decision on the proposed action. State and local government agencies and stakeholders were informed of the proposed action and comments were solicited regarding relevant issues. The relevant issues of concern raised regarding the proposed action include encountering contaminated soils during construction, conflicts with the Alaska Railroad right-of-way, changes in access to certain portions of the installation, wildland fire protection, fence design aesthetics, impacts to moose and other wildlife movements, recreational use, degradation of stream bank habitat, and impacts to wetlands and vegetation.

Under the action alternatives, vegetation removal would occur within a 30-foot construction and maintenance corridor running for approximately 15.7 miles along the boundary of that portion of Fort Wainwright's Main Post that lies south of the Chena River. Alternatives 2 and 4 include the Chena Bend Golf Course within the fence, but the golf course is outside of the fence in Alternative 3. The Birchwood Housing development, located north of the Chena River, is fenced under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. The proposed action would affect approximately 53 acres, or about 0.39% of the total area of Fort Wainwright's Main Post. Where installed along roadways, the fence will abut the inside boundary of the right-of ways except where a setback may be required due

to terrain considerations. Where installed along the southern boundary of the Chena River, the fence will be set back five feet outside of the high water mark.

Wetlands occur along the fencing route, and approximately 33 acres (0.5% of the Main Post) would be affected by Alternatives 2, 3, or 4. A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act Section 404 wetland permit is not required for this project as long as the fencing is installed in wetlands during the winter months when the ground is frozen. Any ground disturbance conducted in wetlands when the ground is thawed could cause adverse impacts (rutting, vegetation removal, and alteration of hydrology), and would require a Section 404 permit. Surface soils will be slightly disturbed by construction equipment. Construction and soil erosion control techniques will be used to allow the soil to remain intact to encourage regrowth of vegetation during the following growing season. The proposed fencing will be constructed five feet outside of the high water mark of the Chena River and any other water bodies encountered by the proposed fencing. Thus, flow would not be impeded or channelized within floodplains.

No hazardous waste or materials will be generated as a result of the proposed action. The potential for discovery of hazardous waste or materials exists, but these would be disposed of or remediated according to regulatory requirements. Short-term noise impacts would occur during construction, but none would be significant. Occupants of adjacent residences would be notified of construction activities. Potential negative impacts to air quality include small, temporary additions of carbon monoxide from construction activities, however, the project does not represent a significant impact to air quality in the area. No identified historic properties would be affected by the proposed action or any of the alternatives. If cultural resources are discovered during construction, mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure proper handling of sites.

The proposed fence would affect movements of moose, especially along the Richardson Highway. Moose gates, to be constructed at yet to be determined intervals, would allow passage of moose. A pipe-rail fence on the south side of the Chena River would allow large and small mammal movement to continue along the river corridor without interruption and will prevent both large and small mammals from being trapped within the fenced area.

Recreational access to the newly fenced area of the Main Post will be affected by the proposed action only to the extent that unauthorized pedestrian and vehicular access will be reduced. Individuals would continue to be required to use the Fort Wainwright Main Gate and go through the official access procedure of checking-in rather than entering at unauthorized points along the boundary. As is currently the case, recreational access to Fort Wainwright would be limited or prohibited only when particular areas are in use for military training or elevated security levels warrant such action.

The aesthetic impact of the fence will be limited, but more pronounced in areas where no fencing currently exists. The greatest impact will likely be along the south side of the Chena River, however the use of pipe rail fencing will serve to minimize the aesthetic

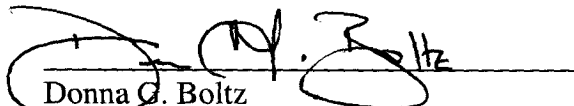
impact. No significant aesthetic impacts to private property are expected. Only a relatively short length of the fence boundary will pass near residential areas.

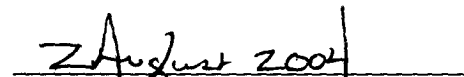
Mitigation Measures: To mitigate potential adverse impacts of the proposed action, mitigation measures listed in Section 2.3.5 of the EA that pertain to the selected alternative will be undertaken as part of the proposed action.

Conclusions: In an attempt to balance the Army's training and readiness responsibilities and land stewardship obligations, USAG-AK has chosen Alternative 2: Main Post Fencing as its preferred alternative. Based on a review of the information contained in this EA, in combination with intended mitigation measures, USAG-AK determined that construction of the installation fencing at Fort Wainwright, as set forth in Alternative 2, is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the environment within the meaning of Section 102(2) (C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for this proposed action is not required.

Point of Contact: Requests for further information should be directed to Roger Sayre, Environmental Resources Department, United States Army Alaska (USAG-AK), Directorate of Public Works, Fort Wainwright, Alaska 99703-6500, telephone: (907) 353-3001; roger.sayre@wainwright.army.mil.

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